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IN THE CLAIMS

The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with underlining and deleted text with ~~striketrough~~. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

Please **AMEND** claims in accordance with the following.

Please **CANCEL** claim 25.

1-13. (CANCELLED)

14. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A server connected with a plurality of multifunction machines via a network, the server comprising:

a plurality of functions;

a plurality of request processing units in communication with the functions and processing function~~that process~~ requests received from at least one of the multifunction machines to execute the functions;

an assigning unit that assigns one of the request processing unit~~units~~ to the multifunction machine based on the a connection request from the multifunction machine, and sends a completion-of-assignment notification to the multifunction machine, ~~the completion of assignment notification~~ indicating that processing of the a function request is possible, wherein the request processing unit controls executing the function according to a function command received from the assigned multifunction machine;

an assignment canceling unit that cancels the assignment of the request processing unit to the multifunction machine, when the command of the function the request is not received from the assigned multifunction machine within a predetermined amount of time; and

an information recorder that has multifunction connection information, the multifunction connection information having information indicative of whether the multifunction machine is acceptable to be in an operable state in linkage with the server, wherein the connection request from the multifunction machine is received assigned to the request processing unit in the

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assigning based on the multifunction connection information.

15. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The server according to claim 14, wherein the completion-of-assignment notification has information of ~~a~~the function, and the function is processable by the server.

16. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The server according to claim 14, ~~the server further comprising:~~

wherein the function is a fax that faxes image data; data, and

wherein the request processing unit controls the fax and sends the image data received from the multifunction machine, when the request processing unit receives from the multifunction machine the request a fax command as the function command to fax the image data~~from the multifunction machine.~~

17. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The server according to claim 14, ~~further comprising:~~

wherein the function is a recorder that records image data; data, and

wherein the request processing unit records the image data received from the multifunction machine on the recorder, when the request processing unit receives from the multifunction machine a record command as the function command~~the request from the multifunction machine to record the image data.~~

18. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The server according claim 14, further comprising:

a utilizing situation recorder that records utilizing situation information received from the plurality of multifunction machines, the utilizing situation information being information how often each of the multifunction machines is used; and

a utilizing situation information transmitter that transmits, when any one of nodes on the network makes a request for transmitting the utilizing situation information, the utilizing situation information back to said node having transmitted a transmission request.

19. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The server according to claim 18, wherein the utilizing situation information transmitter transmits the utilizing situation information to the network nodes~~node~~ in accordance with a predetermined schedule.

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20. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The server according to claim 18, the server further comprising:

a destruction detecting unit that detects a destruction of the information recorded on the utilizing situation recorder;

a utilizing situation information managing unit that requests each of the multifunction machines to transmit the utilizing situation information when the destruction detecting unit detects the destruction, and again records the transmitted utilizing situation information on the utilizing situation recorder.

21. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A storage medium readable by a computer, the storage medium storing a program of instructions executable by the computer to perform a function as a server, the function comprising:

providing a plurality of functions;

providing a plurality of processing requests by at least one of the request processing units in communication with the functions and processing function requests, the request being received from at least one of the multifunction machines to execute the functions;

assigning one of the request processing units to the multifunction machine based on the connection request from the multifunction machine, and sending a completion-of-assignment notification to the multifunction machine, the completion-of-assignment notification indicating that processing of the a function request is possible, wherein the request processing unit controls executing the function according to a function command received from the assigned multifunction machine; and

canceling the assignment of the request processing unit to the multifunction machine, when the command of the function request is not received from the assigned multifunction machine within a predetermined amount of time, and

recording and having storing multifunction connection information, the multifunction connection information indicating whether the multifunction machine is acceptable to be in an operable state in linkage with the server, wherein the connection request from the multifunction machine is received assigned to the request processing unit based on the multifunction connection information.

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22. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A method of executing multiple functions using multifunction apparatuses connected to each other via a network, comprising:

- providing a plurality of functions in a multifunction apparatus;
- providing in the multifunction apparatus a plurality of request processing units in communication with the functions and processing function requests received from at least one other multifunction apparatus to execute the functions;
- assigning one of the request processing units to the other multifunction apparatus based on a connection request from the multifunction apparatus, processing request to a usable multifunction apparatus among the multifunction apparatuses based on operation content of the request and transmitting a notification indicative of the assignment to the usable multifunction apparatus an assignment notification to the multifunction apparatus indicating that processing of a function request is possible, wherein the request processing unit controls executing the function according to a function command received from the assigned multifunction apparatus;
- and
- canceling the assignment of the request processing unit to the multifunction apparatus, when the command of the function is not received from the assigned multifunction apparatus within a predetermined amount of time executing a function via the usable multifunction apparatus in accordance with the assigned request.

23. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) The server according to claim 14, wherein the server has information of each of the multifunction machines, and the information has at least one of a status of the multifunction machine, a type of executable job, an address on the network, user information and a type of connection.

24. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A server connected with a plurality of multifunction machines via a network, the server comprising:

- a plurality of functions;
- a plurality of request processing units in communication with the functions and processing function requests that process a request received from at least one of the multifunction machines to execute the functions;
- an assigning unit that assigns at least one of the request processing units to the multifunction machine based on the a connection request from the multifunction machine, and

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sends a completion-of-assignment notification to the multifunction machine, ~~the completion of assignment~~ indicating that processing of ~~the a function request~~ is possible, wherein the request processing unit controls executing the function according to a function command received from the assigned multifunction machine; and

an assignment canceling unit that cancels the assignment of the request processing unit to the multifunction machine, when the command of the function request is not received from the assigned multifunction machine within a predetermined amount of time,

wherein the server has at least one of option information, multifunction machine connection information, non-self system linkage information, and intra self-system registration address information, the option information is information of a function executable by the server, the multifunction machine, and the non-self system linkage information is used when the server ~~accesses~~accesses another system on the network, and the ~~intra~~intra self-system registration address information is used when the server accesses intra self-system.

25. (CANCELLED)